

SALTWATER FISHING— WHERE TO BEGIN



etting hooked on saltwater fishing is easy. The boil of a striped bass with its tail slapping the water as it takes a surface plug at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel or the thrill of a white marlin catapulting from the indigo waters of the Gulf Stream have converted many skeptics into devotees.

The journey from an enthusiastic novice to an accomplished saltwater angler can be daunting. Saltwater fish are not constrained by boundaries, often migrating substantial distances along the East Coast. Water temperature changes, photoperiod (length of light in the day), and the presence or absence of baitfish can trigger movements. Learning when to fish for different species is not an easy task.

The potential area to fish is huge. The Chesapeake Bay and coastal waters of the Atlantic Ocean off Virginia comprise well over 3000 square miles of fishing area within the reach of most boats. How to identify the productive areas to fish is the second challenge.

Then, the tackle, techniques and best baits must be determined. For people who did not have the luxury of growing up on the water, the time needed to learn by “trial and error” is not a viable option while balancing the demands of a career and family. Fortunately, other options exist.

JOIN A CLUB

One of the best roads to becoming a better saltwater fisherman is to join an angling club. There are more than a dozen angling organizations in the eastern portion of Virginia. Some clubs are organized around a single species of fish or type of fishing, while others encourage membership from a broad spectrum of anglers. Some organizations are primarily social in nature, favoring monthly meetings and intracub competitions, while others are involved mainly in fisheries management.

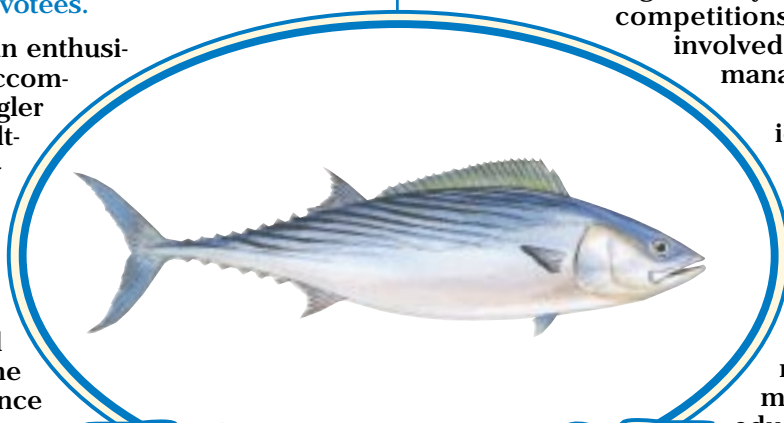
Clubs enable novice anglers to meet other fishermen, exchange ideas, develop friendships and find new fishing partners. Many clubs hold monthly meetings with the major portion of the meetings devoted to education. Usually, the educational segments of the meetings involve guest speakers, who describe techniques for catching certain species

of fish.

Club meetings are almost always open to the public, so a potential member can attend before joining. Announcements of club meetings are usually carried in local newspapers in the outdoor news section.

GO TO SHOWS AND ATTEND SEMINARS

Boat shows, sportsman shows and outdoor expositions are a regular feature in eastern Virginia, particularly during the winter



BONITO



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months. All of the shows have retail exhibits of boats and fishing tackle, and some feature seminars by local experts on various types of saltwater fishing. Usually, the only charge is for admission to the show; the seminars are free. Shows are extensively advertised in local newspapers and on radio.

Local angling experts, charterboat captains and guides, and outdoor writers occasionally hold saltwater fishing seminars. These may last a few hours or all day and may cover the ways to catch a single species of fish or a wide range of fish. Seminars which are not held in conjunction with boat or sportsman shows usually charge a registration fee. Seminars are often advertised with posters or flyers at tackle shops and marinas and are mentioned in the outdoor sections of local newspapers which feature a "calendar of upcoming events". Also, many outdoor writers with local newspa-

pers will mention upcoming seminars in their columns.

GO TO SCHOOL

A few angling experts, charterboat captains and guides offer saltwater fishing classes. Normally, these will run for two or three hours one night a week for several consecutive weeks. Fishing classes charge a registration fee and often are limited in size. Information about upcoming classes can be found on posters and flyers at tackle shops and marinas and in the outdoor section of local newspapers which feature a "calendar of upcoming events". Also, many outdoor writers with local newspapers will mention upcoming classes in their columns.

CHARTER A BOAT OR HIRE A GUIDE

Charterboat captains and guides are professionals. They know the local waters, keep up with new fishing techniques, and know what fish are available and where to catch them. Many professional skippers and top local anglers have gotten their starts by working as mates on charterboats during the summer months.

A good way to learn the basic angling techniques for catching certain species of fish is to charter a boat or hire a guide to take you fishing. For example, if you want to learn how to catch marlin, tuna, and dolphin, charter a boat for an offshore fishing trip out of Rudee Inlet in Virginia Beach or Wachapreague on the Eastern Shore. Pay attention to how the mate rigs the baits, prepares the terminal tackle and how the baits are fished. Most mates and charterboat skippers do not mind answering your questions, but do not expect them to spend the day teaching you how to fish or to give away their favorite fishing locations. The best way to approach the day is to be observant.

Many top saltwater anglers charter boats on a regular basis. Sometimes they want to pursue a type of fishing their boats and equipment are not prepared to handle or they just want to enjoy a day of fishing, without the hassles of preparing baits and tackle, navigating a boat, and cleaning up after the trip is over. Most charterboats welcome experienced anglers and are willing to allow them a greater role in the fishing experience. Of course, this should be discussed with the captain prior to leaving the dock.

More than 200 charterboats and headboats operate in Virginia waters, and they pursue every type of fish that visits local waters. A list of charterboats can be found in the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Guide, which is available from the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament, 968 S. Oriole Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23451, (757) 491-5160.



MAGAZINES, BOOKS, TELEVISION SHOWS AND VIDEOS

No matter what the subject matter, from finding an exotic vacation spot where you can catch tarpon and billfish to learning how to catch tautog in the Chesapeake Bay, there is probably a publication or video which covers the topic. In fact, the variety of media publications covering outdoor activities is so large, finding the ones which meet a particular person's needs can be a challenge.

Publications and videos can be evaluated according to several criteria. First, what is the subject matter targeted by the publication. Some publications cover a wide range of outdoor activities, such as fishing, hunting, camping, and hiking, while others target a single activity, such as fishing. Publications may further limit their coverage to a more specific activity, such as saltwater fishing, surf fishing or even fishing for a single species of fish.

A second measure of a publication or video is its scope of coverage. Is the focus of the coverage local, regional, national or even international.

Finally, anglers should consider the type of coverage offered by a publication or video. Some publications focus on "how-to" information, while others relate stories and create action and adventure tales. Some focus on destinations and travel information, while others focus on the evaluation of equipment. Of course, there are publications and videos which combine all of these themes in their offerings.

Publications and videos can be found in numerous places, but the best places to start are local tackle shops, outdoor shops and marinas. They routinely stock these types of products, and they are most likely to carry publications and videos focusing on local fishing opportunities.

Authors and publishers often attend local boat shows and outdoor shows, which gives anglers the opportunity to peruse the product and talk with the author or publisher.

Libraries, book stores and retail stores with outdoor product sections are a good source for outdoor publications and videos.

INTERNET

Increasingly, the internet is becoming a source of fishing information. Individuals, groups and clubs, tackle shops, charterboat captains, and outdoor publications are maintaining websites providing a wealth of fishing information. Many also feature "noteboards", where anglers can ask specific questions and receive answers from the hosting organization and other users of the website. Information available covers a wide range of topics, including local fishing reports, knot



tying, satellite surface water temperature information, conservation issues, weather and, of course, when, where, and how to catch various species of fish.

RECORD FISH

Some members of the angling public become interested in the pursuit of large fish, resulting in the need to identify recognized records for various species of fish. The official keeper of world saltwater records is the International Game Fish Association. They have been establishing and promoting equipment and angling regulations and practices in a highly successful effort to provide uniform rules for world record catches since 1939. Complete information about the world record program is available from:

International Game Fish Association
300 Gulf Stream Way
Dania Beach, FL 33004
(954) 927-2628
(954) 924-4299 (fax)
IGFAHQ@aol.com (e-mail)
www.igfa.org (website)

State records are maintained by the agency or commission charged with managing an individual state's marine fisheries. In Virginia state records fall under the jurisdiction of the Marine Resources Commission through the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament.

VIRGINIA ANGLING CLUBS and ORGANIZATIONS

Eastern Shore Anglers Club
P. O. Box 415
Accomac, VA 23301

Eastern Shore Marlin Club
P. O. Box 144
Nassawadox, VA 23413

Great Bridge Fishermen's Association
1007 N. Battlefield Blvd.
Chesapeake, VA 23320

Northampton County Anglers Club
P. O. Box 721
Eastville, VA 23347

**Peninsula Saltwater
Sportfishing Association**
P. O. Box 5194
Newport News, VA 23605

Portsmouth Anglers Club
P. O. Box 7842
Portsmouth, VA 23707

Tidewater Anglers Club
P. O. Box 8157
Norfolk, VA 23503

Virginia Anglers Club
P. O. Box 31494
Richmond, VA 23294

Virginia Beach Anglers Club
P. O. Box 8602
Virginia Beach, VA 23452

Virginia Beach Billfish Foundation
P.O. Box 6395
Virginia Beach, VA 23456-6395

Virginia Beach Sand Witches
P. O. Box 62342
Virginia Beach, VA 23462

Middle Peninsula Fly Rodders
P. O. Box 665
North, VA 23128

Virginia Coastal Fly Anglers
P. O. Box 2866
Virginia Beach, VA 23450

Virginia Charterboat Association
P. O. Box 38
Wicomico Church, VA 22579

**Coastal Conservation Association
State Office**
2100 Marina Shore Dr.
Suite 108
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
(757) 481-1226

**Coastal Conservation Association
Central Chapter**
10699 Courtney Rd.
Glen Allen, VA 23060

**Coastal Conservation Association
Eastern Shore Chapter**
7514 Wellington Neck Rd.
Franktown, VA 23354

**Coastal Conservation Association
Fredericksburg Chapter**
608 William St.
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

**Coastal Conservation Association
Northern Virginia Chapter**
13228 Poet Ct.
Fairfax, VA 22033

**Coastal Conservation Association
Peninsula Chapter**
729 Thimble Shoals Blvd.
Suite 5-C
Newport News, VA 23606

**Coastal Conservation Association
Piedmont Chapter**
3942 Deep Woods Dr.
Earlysville, VA 22936

**Coastal Conservation Association
Southwestern Virginia Chapter**
7031 Mt. Chestnut Rd.
Roanoke, VA 24018

**Coastal Conservation Association
Tidewater Chapter**
1613 Dylan Dr.
Virginia Beach, VA 23464

